THE POWER OF SUGGESTION

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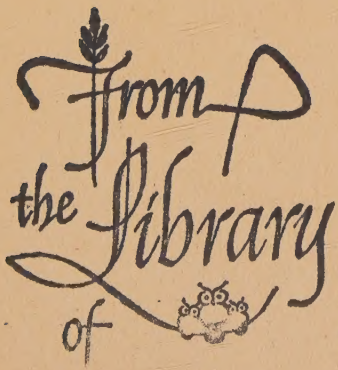

CHARLES O. GINGERICH

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NEW YORK
DODGE PUBLISHING COMPANY
148-156 WEST 23rd STREET

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By H. M. CALDWELL

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Printed in the United States of America

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THE LAW OF SUGGESTION

THE Ancient Philosopher, who said, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he," was probably not familiar with the principles of the newer Psychology. Nevertheless, this old Hebrew thinker has stated most clearly the fundamental thought of Psychology as applied both to man's body and soul. The most important fact which has yet been discovered in regard to the sub-conscious mind, is the fact that it is suggestible, or in other words, that it is subject to influence and direction. In this, it does not differ from the conscious mind, except that under certain conditions, it is more amenable to external

control, and seems to lie in closer contact with the physical organism. The thought once lodged in the sub-conscious, seems to be more influential both in our physical and moral life than when it simply holds a place in the conscious mind.

At the very outset, let us free our minds of the idea so prevalent, that this influence of suggestion is something strange or uncanny or even supernatural. As a matter of fact, the power of suggestion is something that we are all using, consciously or unconsciously, in the every day experiences of life. Your child falls and hurts herself, and begins to cry. Instantly you help her up and kissing the bruised place, you say, "Mother has kissed it, and made it well again;" and under the influence of your suggestion, she ceases to cry. If we are wise we do not constantly talk to our

children about their innocent wrong-doings, but we seek to divert their minds from that which we feel is wrong or harmful, by suggesting something better. You find yourself unable to sleep, your mind is filled with disturbing or anxious thoughts; finally you realize that this "does not pay," and dismiss from your mind such thoughts, and in a few moments are asleep. You have diverted your mind from the troublesome things, and by the power of suggestion have induced the sleep needed. In the home there is some annoying experience. It may be very petty and yet it disturbs. You lose your equilibrium for the moment, and as you seek to recover your self-poise, you say to yourself, "It is very foolish to become worried or troubled over this thing. I am going to forget it." You turn your attention to some other task, or you take up a

book — anything to divert your thought from the annoyance. It is the power of suggestion that you use to recover mental poise.

Speaking generally, anything we really sense; that is, — see, hear, taste, smell or feel — is a suggestion. In the psychological sense, suggestion means much more than this. It stands for a clear, definite perception, thought or mental image, of sufficient force to make an impression on the sub-conscious mind. In other words, mental perceptions, thoughts and desires become " suggestions " in the technical sense, only when lodged in this inner self.

Let me illustrate the difference between suggestion, speaking generally, and suggestion in this technical sense. You have attended a church service. Everything in the place of worship has furnished suggestions — the decora-

tions, the stained glass windows, the character of the woodwork, the music of the choir. Then comes the sermon. Suppose the preacher takes some clear-cut, definite statement from the Bible, such as the words, " The wages of sin is death." As he unfolds the meaning of the text, suppose that he reiterates the text over and over again, illustrating it first in one way, then in another. The service closes, and as you go back to your home, gradually the suggestions furnished by the music, the decorations, the woodwork, or the stained glass windows, fade out of your mind. But the next day you face some temptation, and there comes into your mind, you know not just how, the words of the text, " The wages of sin is death." It causes you to hesitate, and after the momentary struggle you turn your back upon the temptation. The thought of the text has furnished a suggestion

so strong, that it has become a controlling factor in your conduct, and it may be, influences your life for ever. Of all the various suggestions made upon you that Sunday morning, the text alone has become a suggestion in the technical sense, because it was strong enough to lodge itself deep down in your subconscious self.

Let a man take a retrospect of his past, and if he reflects carefully, he will find that every serious act of his life may be traced back ultimately to a suggestion. It may have come as you talked with some friend; it may have come from some sermon or lecture to which you have listened; it may have come from the pages of some book that impressed you profoundly; it may have come out of some deep experience of your life. Every effect has its cause, and if it were always possible for us to trace back these serious acts of our

lives to their ultimate causes, we should find in the last analysis a suggestion, whatever its source. Every act of our lives, whether for weal or for woe, began in the little germ of suggestion. It may have unfolded very gradually; in the beginning, the germ planted may have been so faintly impressed upon you, that memory cannot recall the time when it was first lodged in the mind; but nevertheless, the source of the whole range of human conduct, may be traced back to these first suggestions.

So you see Mental Suggestion is not a radically new or startling thing. It is simply the deeper understanding, and the persistent and consistent application of a law of mind, which is as old as the human race. Let us turn our attention first to the power of suggestion as we see it operative in our general life as human beings.

There is the suggestive power of

Heredity. We are all carrying in our bodies, in our moral characters, in our temperaments, in our personalities, elements which have come to us from the past. But in what sense do they come from the past? There is much erroneous thinking about heredity. The intelligent physician will tell you that the actual disease is not transmitted, but only the tendency toward the disease. A weakened nerve condition, or possibly a defective organism may be transmitted, but not the disease itself. Let it be the tendency to tuberculosis, or insanity, or cancer; only under certain conditions, by no means invariably, does the actual disease manifest itself. It is just as true that bad habits are not transmitted. There may be handed down a weakened will, or an immoral tendency, but the actual evil habit is not transmitted. That the tendency, rather than the thing itself, is trans-

mitted, seems to be the general theory of Heredity accepted by modern scholars. How do the scientists explain, then, the appearance in generation after generation of certain forms of disease? How can we account for the fact that in successive generations we see the same immoral tendencies manifesting themselves, as in the famous Juke family? We are convinced today that these tragic facts are best explained by the power of suggestion. A man looks back and says, "My father died of tuberculosis," or "My mother died of cancer," or, "There is insanity in my family." The mental picture of the dread disease is in his mind, and furnishes the suggestion. Under certain conditions, such as a low state of vitality, or when in a mood of depression, he broods over the fact of the family taint, the suggestion becomes so strong as to produce conditions that

bring about the actual disease. So with evil habits. The immoral tendency which may be transmitted is developed into actual wrong conduct by suggestion. The child of criminal parents who becomes a criminal is not in any sense born a criminal, except through the power of suggestion. If you have studied the subject, you know how tremendously startling are the facts disclosed as to the power of pre-natal suggestion in the life of the unborn child. Boys and girls, immortal souls, are started wrong from infancy, physically, morally and spiritually, by the pre-natal suggestions of the mother. The biographer of Lord Byron tells us that the only way to understand his brilliant and yet strangely tragic and immoral life, is by a careful study of the pre-natal suggestions furnished by his mother. We take greater pains in breeding cattle, than we do in bringing

children into the world — to our shame be it said.

Then there is the suggestive power of *Environment*, to which we are all more or less susceptible. The furnishings of the home give to the child unconsciously some of the strongest suggestions. The child, fortunate enough to be reared in a home where good taste and the love for the truly beautiful is expressed, is constantly influenced, during these impressionable years, by powerful suggestions of beauty and good taste. A child reared in other surroundings, is influenced by the opposite suggestions. We know how much the mental and spiritual atmosphere of the home means to the growing child. Let the atmosphere be discordant, "like sweet bells out of tune:" where there is a clashing of wills, manifesting itself in petty quarrels, impatient speech or angry gestures, and the child is con-

stantly receiving suggestions, which almost inevitably flower forth in ignoble traits of character. The home, on the other hand, whose habitual atmosphere is one of harmony and peace, where misunderstandings, if they arise, are always settled "behind the scenes," where parents are wise enough and self-controlled enough, never to give way to impatience or anger in the presence of their children — such a home atmosphere, and there are many such "heavenly homes," is silently and yet constantly lodging in the child's mind, suggestions that must translate themselves into beautiful, noble character in after years.

We recognize certain national traits of character as due to the physical environment of a people. Some historians explain the great differences in temperament between nations, chiefly by the difference in physical conditions.

Cloudy skies or prevailing stormy weather, sooner or later make their impress upon the life of a people; while a country in which the skies are generally bright, and where the air is clear and bracing, furnishes a mental and moral, as well as physical tonic to its inhabitants.

Who can estimate the influence of the atmosphere of the school-room upon its pupils? How anxious we are that the environment of our children, during these school days, shall be right. The personality of the teacher, her spiritual and mental attitude, can poison irreparably the atmosphere of the school-room, so that we see its injurious effect in our children. The teacher who is self-controlled, cheerful, hopeful, good-natured and sympathetic, can make the atmosphere one of the most tremendously educative factors in the child's experience. The deepest lessons of

life for young or old, are not the result of direct, deliberate instruction; they are the lessons we learn indirectly, that are taught us by suggestion.

Our age has gone to the extreme in the matter of *advertising*. It makes no difference as to the thing, if only advertised properly, it sells. No matter how foul or poisonous the ingredients in the patent medicine, if only it is advertised long enough and "big" enough, it succeeds. We all fall under the influence of the big department store today through its extensive advertising. Everywhere, in the daily papers, on the board fence, in the cars, and worst of all on the face of Nature, we are met by the picture or the rhyme or the big letters; and the man who keeps up that sort of advertising, by and by wins the public. As Barnum said, "We all like to be humbugged," and the success of advertising is simply due to

suggestion. The cheapness of any particular article, or its unusual value, makes its impression; and most of us will follow the lure of the advertisement, if it be only persuasive enough, and spend our money again and again for things we really do not need, and that we had no idea of buying at the outset.

One of the most potent suggestions in the history of humanity has been that furnished by *Superstition*. It is Lessing who says, "we are all swayed by our superstitions, even after we have come to understand them." If you have read Zola's masterpiece, "Lourdes," you will recall the tragically vivid picture which he draws of the Roman Catholic shrine in the little French town of Lourdes, and of the annual pilgrimage of thousands of ailing people from all over Europe. He describes with wonderful acuteness the psychological influences which are

brought to bear upon these invalids, and how in many cases genuine cures are wrought. How will you explain the healing by the Sacred relics or bones in China, in India and in Africa? How can you explain the curative powers which are experienced by many who have touched the holy coat at Treves? It is said that the sick pilgrims at Lourdes spend every year from a million and a half to two million dollars. What is the explanation? The power of suggestion. You say it is superstition, and you are right, so far as the explanation of the cure is concerned; but the Sacred shrine or the bones or the relics or the coat or what not, furnish the mental suggestion, which in many cases undoubtedly is effective in working the cure. We need not flatter ourselves that we are free from all superstition; there may be one of my readers who is carrying a chestnut

in his pocket or wearing a metal ring on some particular finger; or who hesitates to sit down to a dinner with thirteen, or to make a journey on Friday. Superstition in some form persists, through the power of suggestion, in every civilization and in every religion. There is no suggestion in all the world so powerful as that furnished by some hoary superstition. The new Psychology is the sworn enemy of Superstition. It furnishes a scientific explanation of many phenomena that in the past have been the food upon which superstition has flourished. It explodes the superstition of Witchcraft, thus assisting in the destruction of a delusion that has caused, within the Christian Era, the butchery by legal process of fourteen millions of hapless and innocent victims.

Visit the famous Continental Spas, with their mineral baths, their sulphur

and iron springs, where invalids who can pay the price, journey every year for their health. Ask any of the physicians at these places whether they really think that the benefits, when obtained, are due to the mineral water, or to the power of suggestion.

How many times does the doctor say to his wealthy patient, "You need a sea voyage; if you will only travel you will be cured." Do you really think there is anything particular helpful in the sea voyage itself, or the travelling? These things may be beneficial, nevertheless the real fact is, that in this way the patient is taken out of the old atmosphere, and his mind diverted; in other words, a new line of suggestions is furnished that in many cases work the cure. The sea voyage, or the journey, is the excuse for the suggestion, or the mechanical means by which the suggestion is made to the mind. The

chief thing needed, in all such cases, is to change the mental atmosphere of the patient.

Suggestive therapeutics or Psychotherapy is claiming more and more of our attention today. Its principles underlie all these various healing cults, and play a tremendous part in the regular practice of medicine; and as we shall see, the great truth upon which Psychotherapy depends, is the power of suggestion.

The Professor of Healing, whatever may be his special school, who claims that all means are to be disregarded, is absolutely wrong. I cannot believe that any intelligent man has a right to ignore any of the great means by which human suffering and disease can be alleviated or cured; but for a man to deny that there are mental and spiritual healing powers, is just as absurd and wrong. We must admit

frankly that drugs do have a chemical effect; we cannot pronounce worthless, the rubbing of the masseur or the manipulations of the osteopath; the hydropath deserves some credit; diet, exercise and recreation all play their part. All these means are beneficial, they are factors in making for all-round physical well-being. But in the light of today's knowledge, we must recognize that along with all these agencies, there is always present the power of suggestion, in the influence of the mind over the body. Just how great that power is, no one perhaps can dogmatically assert today. That it is greater than we have ever dreamed, is without question. The future alone will reveal the extent of its power.

Another way in which we witness this power of suggestion, is in the formation of *public opinion*. Public opinion is the concensus of the opinions of a

community, a city, a nation, or an age; but what creates public opinion on any question? We know how the strong, positive, vigorous thinking of a few minds, is able to create public sentiment in any community, or age. Public opinion is created not by the rank and file of men, but rather by the positive thinking of the few, who hold places of influence or positions of leadership. The times in the life of a people, when some great wave of feeling sweeps over a community, are due to mental influences affecting the mass of men. This is why the financial panic of 1907-08 was described, and rightly, as a "psychological panic."

How often, in a political campaign, do we witness a complete change of sentiment as respects different candidates. In the recent New York State election, there was such a complete reversal of sentiment within two weeks,

that New York State saved itself from lasting disgrace by sending Governor Hughes back to Albany. What caused the change of sentiment? My own opinion is that it was due to nothing less than the fact that here and there, throughout the State and the country, there was the strong thinking, the positive vigorous desire, on the part of high-minded men and women.

In the recent play, called "The Witching Hour," the author illustrates the same power of the thinking of people, even to the extent of influencing the decision of a jury in a criminal case. Whether such power is possible may be questioned; but nevertheless, we understand today that public feeling and sentiment, social, political and religious, is due primarily to the fact that a number of individuals are holding certain thoughts, have taken a certain mental attitude towards the questions

involved, and their thoughts go forth in great thought vibrations, to influence and even to radically change the thinking of multitudes of other minds.

The same phenomena are to be observed in times of religious revival, especially among ignorant or highly emotional people, such as the coloured race in the South. The psychologist explains rationally many of the phenomena which are witnessed at such a time. The muscular trance, the experience of ecstasy which the negro often reaches in religious meetings, particularly if they are protracted long enough, is nothing more than the result of suggestion. We have attributed, even in our more settled communities, many of the experiences of religious revivals to the spirit of God, when they are really due to the power of mental suggestion. A very interesting book has been published recently by Pro-

fessor Davenport on "The Psychological Element in Religious Revivals." It is immensely revealing along this line, and shows what a tremendous part suggestion plays, when people are brought together in large companies under emotional stress.

Enough has been said, as respects suggestion in its general aspect. It is nothing new or startling. It is a power which we all, consciously or unconsciously, employ every day and almost every hour. We are all susceptible to it, to a greater or less degree. Let me refer briefly to the workings of the Law of Suggestion, in its more technical sense. We have already seen that in the psychological sense, suggestion is a thought or mental image, held so definitely and intensely in the conscious mind, that it becomes lodged in the sub-conscious self. There are three essentials to the successful lodging of a

suggestion. (1) There must be a clear and definite idea of what you want to do. If you are the parent or the teacher, you must clearly formulate in your own mind a mental picture of the end you desire to attain. Suppose the child shows a tendency towards dishonesty, which you desire to overcome. Clearly, in your own mind, you must make the mental picture of the honest boy. Exclude from your mind every other thought about your child, for the time being. (2) There must be a series of suggestions or mental pictures given the child, adapted to the end which you have in view. (3) There must be the regular daily repetition of the mental picture or the suggestion. Let me illustrate by a concrete case the workings of these principles. Professor N. N. Riddell, one of the pioneers in the practical application of these psychological principles to child training,

tells of his experience in a California town several years ago, where he was delivering a course of lectures. He wanted a boy to distribute hand-bills. He finally found one, but as he was about to employ him, he was told that the boy was notoriously dishonest. His reputation was so fixed in the community that the storekeepers always kept their eyes on him when he went by, and if he came inside they watched him every moment. The boy's own mother told the Professor that he was incorrigible, and that she had been obliged to send him away from home when he was only nine years of age. Professor Riddell hired the boy and then talked frankly with him. He said, "Now I am going to be honest with you, and you are going to be honest with me and we are going to be honest with everybody else." In the course of the conversation, he asked him, if he had

ever been tempted to do anything dishonest. The boy confessed he had. Little by little the boy told of how he had stolen repeatedly. Then the Professor, without attempting to rebuke him harshly, said, " In your heart you are an honest boy, you really want to do the right thing, and I am going to trust you implicitly and we are going to get along all right together; you are not going to steal from me, any more than I am going to steal from you, and you are not going to steal from any one else." As he talked the little fellow burst into tears, and then, while in the tender, sympathetic mood, the Professor said, " Now you are an honest boy, you do not do dishonest things, you will never steal again." Several times during the day, he talked with him quietly in the same strain, that is, repeated the suggestion of honesty. Within forty-eight hours he sent him

to the bank with a ten-dollar bill, to get the change. His mother had said that formerly he could not be trusted with a dime. He worked with the Professor for three weeks, and there was not a single sign of any dishonest or thieving tendency, and the Professor says in his published lecture, that the last he heard the boy was absolutely cured of his dishonesty. This illustrates the workings of these three essential principles: there must be first the clear-cut idea of what you want to do; then there must be the series of mental pictures or images adapted to the end you have in view; lastly there must be the constant repetition of the suggestion.

Practical experiments have demonstrated beyond question, the efficiency of suggestion. The mind of the dullard may be gradually awakened, vicious and cruel tendencies can be over-

come, the elements of virtue, purity, honesty or kindness may be so established in the sub-conscious mind, as to make them the controlling factors in character. Some lives are much more susceptible and responsive to the influence of suggestion than others, but all can be affected. Some can be changed much more rapidly than others, but patient, persistent effort, wisely directed, is sure to bring results in all.

There is another form of suggestion, known as auto-suggestion, where the suggestion does not come from outside, but rather from one's own conscious mind. This is the highest form of the operation of this wonderful Law of Suggestion, for when we can clearly understand the law and its method of operation *within ourselves*, then we can create the thought, we can produce the impression, we can lodge in the sub-conscious mind the suggestion that will

work out within ourselves, physical health, mental power and moral strength.

How mighty the force that is resident in all our thoughts! We are only beginning to understand the potentiality of thoughts,—the thoughts we carry with us, and the thoughts of those about us. I am not referring now to the power of one mind, to deliberately convey thought to another mind, according to the established laws of telepathy. I am speaking rather of the influence of the thoughts that we unconsciously carry with us and their power over other lives. There are some people, who, at first meeting, attract us, and others who repel us. Every person carries about himself a thought aura, which is made up of the essence of the thoughts of his mind. The psychic tells us that the thought aura is apparent to his clairvoyant vision, and can de-

scribe the various shades of colour discernible. Here are fifty or more men and women at a reception, or social gathering. Have you ever noticed how, after an hour or so, these people will be broken up into little groups? And if you have walked among the several groups and listened to the conversation, you know how each group has a distinct individuality of its own. Over here, a company of men absorbed in business conversation; yonder, a group of men interested especially in political topics; in another corner a company of ladies discussing perhaps some social gossip. What is it that divides a company of people into these several groups, and gives to each group a distinctive character of its own? It is the law that "like attracts like." It is because every one of us carries with him a mental atmosphere, from which are constantly going forth vibrations, the

character of which depends upon the thoughts we cherish. We may keep our lips sealed tight, we may never whisper even in the still hour of the night, the character of our thought to others; but, nevertheless, the tremendous power of just our thoughts, for good or for evil, cannot longer be questioned. It is true beyond contradiction, that *our thinking* makes us the men and women that we are, creates not only in us, but about us, a certain atmosphere; so that as we move among men, whether we deliberately intend it or not, by virtue of the mental atmosphere we carry with us, we are either making them better and nobler, or else injuring them irreparably.

The one who holds the positive, hopeful, confident, good-natured, kindly, courageous mental attitude, is the person who inevitably radiates sunshine and gladness, good health

and cheer, confidence and happiness, wherever he may go. The one who holds the negative, despondent, fearful, timorous, anxious or sorrowful mental attitude, whether he intends it or not, is, by the law of suggestion, creating forces that make people sad and discouraged, fearful and anxious. We may never utter a word, but, "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he." Every thought you think possesses this suggestive power. It sows its seed in every life you touch. It makes the atmosphere of the home a blessing or curse. How earnestly desirous we should be of understanding the potentiality of our thinking, and these laws by which it operates for the upbuilding, the transforming and the ennobling of other lives, as well as our own!

AUTO-SUGGESTION

AUTO-SUGGESTION

TO the one who has arrived at a true understanding of his own being and the laws of his own nature, is reserved the proud distinction of consciously making himself what he will. In the lower animals, and even among the majority of men, the work of developing the mind and building up the character, is largely performed by outside forces — environment, association, and suggestions of various kinds. But the developed man knows that he himself has a hand in his own upbuilding. Man is coming to his own at last. No longer in theory, but in actual fact, man is becoming the Master

of his Fate. Man is his own educator; man is his own moral and religious teacher; man is his own physician. We need to keep in mind constantly that the wonderful power of which man has become conscious today, becomes effective only as the right thoughts, the right impulses and the right desires are transmitted from his conscious mind to the hidden depths of the life within.

As we have already seen, there are three general forms of suggestion. There are the innumerable suggestions from without, to which we are all more or less subject: heredity and environment, physical and mental, the country in which we live, the Spirit of the Age into which we are born, the friends with whom we associate, the books we read, all the varied experiences through which we pass, are constantly furnishing us with suggestions, which

have a greater or lesser influence upon our lives and characters.

A second form of suggestion to be briefly mentioned is Hypnotic Suggestion. We are all familiar with the marvelous power of Hypnotism and have doubtless witnessed many illustrations of its working. Professor John Duncan Quackenbos in his book entitled "Hypnotism in Mental and Moral Culture" defines Hypnotism as follows: "Hypnotism, or hypnotic sleep, implies a mind condition in which the mental action and the will-power of a sensitive subject are under the control of an operator who has induced the state." The Scientist and the physician have been investigating for some years in this interesting field. Hypnosis has been found most efficacious in the so-called functional nervous diseases. All forms of hysteria are amenable to hypnotic treatment. Chronic alcohol-

ism has also been overcome by hypnotism. In spite of what has been accomplished in this field, however, I cannot refrain from uttering in this connection a word of solemn warning. There seems to be a great confusion in the average mind, as to Hypnotism and its results, beneficial or otherwise. In the hands of the skilled scientist or the conscientious physician, hypnotism may exert, for the time being, a beneficial influence; yet even then it presents grave dangers. Among my friends is a man who has gained eminence in the field of hypnotic suggestion. He is a skilled physician, who has been unusually successful in the treatment of nervous and mental disorders by hypnotism. After about three years of successful practising, he abandoned entirely the use of hypnotism in his work and absolutely refuses today to employ its power. In conversation

with him I asked the question " why ? " He replied — and I know no man more conscientious — " I simply came to understand that it did more harm than good to the individual whom I hypnotized." I think you will see in a moment just why. Hypnotic suggestion implies that some will-power outside, steps in and takes possession of your own will, and dethrones for the time being your reason. While under the influence of this external control, you are the helpless subject. We may have confidence in the scientist or the physician, but I want to remind you that the great citadel of man's soul lies in *his own self-control*, and when we surrender that control to another person, I care not who it is, we are surrendering our God-given and inalienable birthright, — the will, — and are by just that much weakening our power to control ourselves. Every time the patient

comes back to the Hypnotist he falls more easily under his control, until, as I have witnessed myself, in the case of this professional friend, he simply had to look at some of his patients, and they would instantly pass into the hypnotic state. No wonder he said "Any power which gets possession of another soul to the degree that I have gained control of some of my patients, is a dangerous power, and I dare not continue to employ it."

If this is the experience of the conscientious Physician, what shall we say of that large class, who use this power for the purposes of revenue only? Hypnotism has been "popularized" in recent years and made the basis of entertainments of various kinds. There is a class of magazines that are full of advertisements to the effect that some self-styled "Professor" offers a Course of Lessons, in the "Art of Hypnotism."

From inquiries made, it has been discovered that these "Professors" are doing a thriving business. Simply to read through any such advertisements with a knowledge of what is involved in hypnotism, is enough to make one tremble at the possibilities presented for injury and even crime. There is no language strong enough to denounce such dastardly criminals and charlatans. But the ruined lives and shattered reasons of those who have been subjects of hypnotic suggestion in all innocence, should keep us from ever consenting to surrender one iota of our self-control to another will.

The third form of suggestion, and the one that chiefly concerns us now, is Auto-suggestion. This is the highest form of suggestion, because it proceeds from within, from one's own conscious mind. To understand and operate the law of auto-suggestion, means to attain

the highest degree of self-control and self-mastery. This power is resident within every one of us. The sub-conscious mind may be likened to a vast warehouse which we, wisely or foolishly, are constantly filling with material of various kinds. We are continually storing up thoughts, desires, and ambitions, in this "great within," and they are being transformed constantly into life and character, whether we will or no. The great responsibility rests upon us, — we, the individual *egos*, who stand back of both conscious and sub-conscious minds, — to see to it that only the right material goes into the storehouse, that only the right thoughts and desires and impulses are allowed to make their deep impression on the hidden sources of our lives. It is for the sake of making every man and woman independent of other influences, and teaching each individual how to

use the law, and employ these forces for himself, that we are interested in obtaining a right understanding of what is meant by auto-suggestion.

The psychological principle underlying auto-suggestion is precisely the same that underlies suggestion in general. It simply means that for the time being we disassociate in our minds certain thoughts from other thoughts. We deliberately narrow, by our own will-power, the range of our consciousness, so that certain ideas are retained, and a great mass of other ideas are excluded. This is the principle upon which suggestion everywhere works. By shutting out certain ideas, we are enabled to concentrate the mind's attention upon the ideas which we choose to retain in the field of consciousness.

The range of illustrations of the workings of auto-suggestion, is wide indeed. The power and the value of the old

amulets and charms worn by the primitive savage, lay simply in this: They furnished the auto-suggestion, they were the symbols of an inner mental state, the objects to which the yearning or desire could attach itself. The same is true of the Christian Crucifix or the Roman Catholic beads. Religion in all its forms is filled with the same power of auto-suggestion. During the Middle Ages, you know how marvelous are the well-authenticated stories of miracles and wonders which history has not until recently been able to explain. Many of these, which have been rejected by the scientific mind as incredible, and accepted by the religious mind as miraculous, are now seen to be neither one nor the other, but realities to be explained by psychical processes, not understood at the time. Perhaps the most striking of these phenomena is that of Stigmatization. St. Francis of

Assisi furnishes the earliest historical case. His contemplation of the wounds of Jesus was of such an intense character, and so long continued, that his own body finally presented appearances similar to the mental picture, which he had so long entertained. Not only were there similar wounds in his hands and feet, and side, but the appearance of nails in the wounds was so realistic that we are told, after his death, the attempt was made to draw them out. There have been something like ninety or a hundred cases of a similar character since his day, and the same experience is paralleled in our own time in the case of certain hysterical patients. In Nathaniel Hawthorne's story, " The Scarlet Letter," we have a description of a phenomenon, in the scarlet letter emblazoned on the breast of Arthur Dimmesdale, which modern psychology is perfectly able to accept as credible.

During the recent Spanish-American War the following story is told, by a prominent physician who served at the time in one of the hospitals in the South. In passing through the typhoid fever ward, he came to the bedside of a soldier who had been very low, and after examining him, said to the nurse, " He cannot live another hour." The sick man heard the words. As the doctor turned away, he raised himself up in bed and fairly shouted out, " I will live," — and he did. What was it but the antagonism aroused in this dying man by the assertion of the doctor that he was doomed to die, which started such a strong counter auto-suggestion that the man was able to recover? Every physician can tell you of cases in his own experience, of those who have been on the border land between this world and the next, where there seemed no possible chance for recovery; and

then, in that critical hour, something has occurred, — perhaps the arrival of some dear one from a distance, or the receiving of some letter or telegram of hopeful assurance and encouragement, that has turned the tide of the ebbing life; and the person who the doctor felt could not be saved by any human means, has slowly returned to health. It is the power of auto-suggestion working through the sub-conscious mind upon the body and bringing back the stream of health and vitality.

The strongest auto-suggestions that the conscious mind is constantly furnishing, are those that proceed from our habitual or prevalent thoughts and desires. We can divide man's thinking into two general classes, harmonious thinking and discordant thinking. By harmonious thinking, we mean all thoughts of peace and quietness, good cheer, and hopefulness, courage, kind-

liness, sympathy, confidence and trust. These are all harmonious thoughts and make directly for the harmonious life, physical, mental, moral and spiritual. Among discordant thoughts, we must put first of all, anger, hatred, envy, jealousy, lust, greed, cruelty and all malevolent thoughts. To these must be added thoughts of extreme grief and sorrow with their attendants, regrets and disappointments. Here belong also fear, doubt and uncertainty, all worry and anxiety, depression and despair. We must also include in this class all self-condemnatory thoughts, disparagement, self-belittling, with their accompanying self-consciousness. All sinful or erroneous thoughts are discordant in their nature, and must inevitably, by the law of auto-suggestion, work discord in the whole range of man's being.

The world has long been interested

in right and wrong actions. We are at last discovering that all our actions go back for their sources to right and wrong thinking. Prof. Elmer T. Gates, of Washington, has made a number of experiments running through a period of many years, with people while under the influence of harmonious thoughts, and again with the same persons under the influence of some of these discordant thoughts, with strikingly significant results. He has shown unquestionably that the man thinking discordant thoughts is affected throughout his entire organism. His conclusions are very definite: "Every mental activity creates a definite chemical change and a definite anatomical structure in the being who exercises the mental activity;" and again, "The mind of man can by an effort of the will, properly directed, produce measurable changes in the chemistry of the secretions and ex-

cretions of the body." Experiments comparing agreeable exercises with those not so agreeable, prove that the activities in which men take pleasure, set in motion a richer supply of blood than those attendant upon discordant thinking. We have all had personal experience with some of these discordant types of mind. In business you may be associated with one whose habitual thinking is suspicious or distrustful, and you know how uncertain, or depressed or even angry you feel, especially if your nature is quite the opposite. Or when we go into the presence of great sorrow or grief, we feel how these discordant thoughts have for the time being, at least, changed by their suggestions, the characters and even the countenances of our friends, and we seek to shake from ourselves the heavy pall of sorrow. In the same way, the person whose thinking

is lustful, is gradually transformed into the sensual character, who repels us the moment we come into his presence.

The important thing to remember is this: That by the power of auto-suggestion, we are enabled to hold whatever quality of thought we choose. We can banish from our minds the anger, the hatred, the jealousy — thoughts that we know to be so harmful; we can banish from our minds these thoughts of sorrow, and regret and disappointment, which are so depressing to ourselves and to all who come near us: we can banish, if we will, the thoughts of worry and anxiety, that are the direct cause of so much nervous breakdown in this hurrying, bustling age of ours. We must never forget that in the crafts which we are sailing over Life's sea, you and I are the steersmen, not someone else, unless we ignorantly or foolishly surrender the helm to other

hands. This sub-conscious self within us is no navigator; it does not understand seamanship; it cannot see the headlands or the reefs jutting out beyond. It may be likened to the brave men down in the hold of the battleship who keep the engines going, but who have no eyes or ears for what is going on above. So this sub-conscious self, without eyes or ears or the power of inductive reasoning, down there at the centre of our being, takes what we are constantly sending, and with these materials does faithfully its appointed task. We are the steersmen, we stand on deck where we can scan the horizon, and descry the dangerous reefs and treacherous shoals. We can, with steady hand and strong nerve, keep our vessel headed right if we will, for we are the helmsmen. God has placed the conscious mind in every life as the great guardian of the inner self, and says to

it, "Your duty is to watch zealously the entrance into your life. It is for you, and you alone, to say what influences and forces shall go into the secret depths of your being." Environment, heredity, the suggestions from association, all the influences that come from these various sources into our lives, we are to meet at the entrance to the conscious mind, and we must say to some, "You may enter," and to others, "You may not enter." As we value our Eternal Selves, we must stand there on guard, ceaselessly vigilant, always alert and ever ready to decide that only the right thought, the right impulse and the right desire, shall be allowed a place within the mind.

But you say, "Aye, there's the rub; how can I control my thinking? I have learned enough about the operations of the mind, to know that discordant

thinking, through the power of auto-suggestion, is absolutely dangerous to life at every point; I have gone far enough to know that if my life is to realize the highest and best, it must be a life in which harmonious thinking prevails. But how can I command my thoughts?" As a young man said to me recently, "I go along all right for a few days and then I find myself plunged into the deepest kind of depression." I asked him if he had ever tried to locate the cause of these moods. He replied, "It has been that way with our family always, my mother was just like that, as was her mother before her." I said to him, "On your own admission then, it is due to suggestion; you are constantly saying to yourself, 'This moody depression is in my family, my mother and grandmother experienced it, and of course, I have to suffer from it in the same way.' Did you ever think

that it was possible for you, by auto-suggestion, to neutralize that suggestion of heredity in your life and change those conditions?" He replied, "I never thought of it before, but I believe you are right and I am going to try." Another man said to me recently, "I am the slave of an appetite. When the impulse comes upon me to drink liquor, I am obliged to yield. How am I going to control such thoughts and impulses so that they shall not control me?" This is the really pertinent question for every one of us.

There are two ways by which it is possible to control our thoughts and so make sure that the thinking of our minds shall be harmonious rather than discordant. The first is the direct and simple method. It is this, *stop thinking discordant thoughts.* When we have come clearly to see that the real wrong resides potentially in the thought; that

we suffer physically, morally and spiritually because of the character of our thinking, then nobody but an ignoramus or a fool would do anything else but stop thinking that kind of thought. If it is hatred, stop thinking hate; if it is jealousy, stop thinking jealousy; if it is lust, stop thinking lustful thoughts; if it is grief or worry or fear, banish such thoughts from the mind. When we know that such thoughts tend to check the respiration, to change the character of the blood, to manifest themselves chemically in the secretions or excretions of the body — if they have such an actual physical effect as that, to say nothing of their effect on character, then in God's name, stop thinking these thoughts. But you say, " That sounds very simple, but it is not quite so easy to practise it." I grant you that while it may be an easy thing for the man who has the strongly

developed will, the difficulty is that most of us have been thinking wrongly for so long, and know so little about will-power, that we do not find it an easy thing to stop thinking the discordant thoughts even when we have learned that they are harmful in the extreme. So for most people, as yet, this method usually meets with apparent failure.

The second method is that of *substitution.* There are two ways of emptying a glass of water. You can turn it bottom side up, when the water of course will flow out; or you can drop shot into it, one by one, until gradually the shot expel the water. It is the method of substituting something else. So, as you seek to change the character of your thinking, if you do not succeed at first by sheer will-power, then try the substitution method, and put something else into your mind at once.

Divert your mind from the discordant thought by thinking in other channels. Do not wait a moment, when the wrong thought gets into your mind, but turn to the magazine or the book, and read until your mind is filled with other thoughts. Or, take up some task that calls for all your energy, and forces you to concentrate your mental activities along other lines. It may be a little difficult at first, but I want to tell you, on the experience of multitudes of men and women, one of these two methods, if persevered in, will succeed in every life. The trouble is, we all dally with thoughts that we know should not be entertained by the mind a moment, and sometimes, I fear, we rather enjoy them than not, forgetting the tremendous power they wield in our lives.

I grow so weary of the way men and women often excuse themselves, as I

remember how these same people talk to their children. If your child, in the presence of something that you know he ought to do, says "I can't," you reply, "There is no such word as 'can't' in the dictionary, my child." You do not let him live in the realm of "I can't." You tell him over and over again that what must be done, *can* be done, and that he has the power to go ahead and do it. But when we pass out of childhood, and as mature beings, face these great fundamental problems of our natures, we are worse than the children. I talked with a man recently, who is trying to break an evil habit. Over and over again he wailed out, "I have tried, but I can't." I care not how strong the habit, or of how long standing, I care not how tightly the chains of discordant thinking are fastened upon us, — the first thing we must recognize, is the fact

that within our deep essential selves, we are *one* with the Infinite God; that no sin on our part, no wrong thinking of ours, has ever wholly separated us from Him; that we are essentially divine, and that therefore we can, *we can* do the thing that we want to do, and that we know we ought to do. I wish sometimes that these children of ours who have heard our instructions so often along this line, could just turn about and give us a little of the same advice. This is how Christian Science, Metaphysical teachings, theosophical doctrines, and other so-called modern cults, which many people have been studying more or less carefully in the last few years, have brought new power into many lives; they have furnished a method by which the will-power has been cultivated, and people who once said, " I can't do this thing," have learned that they can do

it, and have thereby attained the desired end.

Let me make just one or two practical suggestions as to the method of using this power of auto-suggestion in our daily lives. In the writings of Henry Wood, one of the sanest thinkers along new thought lines, a most practical method is described under what he calls "The Power of Ideal Suggestion." If a man is seriously concerned in the matter of developing himself physically, mentally, morally and spiritually, he certainly ought to be willing to give a little time to it. Let one set aside half an hour or even fifteen minutes every day. Let him go into some room by himself, where he can be undisturbed, quiet and alone; let him get just as far away from the sights and sounds of ordinary life as possible. Then let him take some simple statement of truth, for

example, "God is here," or "I am God's child;" or if he is the victim of some habit, just the statement, "I am free," or "I can and I will;" and as he sits alone in the silence, let him fill his mind full of this one thought. You might say, "Intellectually, this sounds very foolish; these are trite statements, which we may believe or not, but after all what good is to be gained by just repeating over to one's self these words?" The conscious mind sees no use in it whatsoever, but I want to tell you it is truly scientific, for it is the practical application of the great law of auto-suggestion, it is the true method by which we reach the subconscious self. Remember, this subconscious mind is deep in the centre of our complex life; it does not see what we see, or hear what we hear, it is waiting to receive the material that we send down, and every time you

say "God is here," "God is here," "God is here," filling your mind with the thought implied in these words, you are sending down the suggestion that must take rootage, because of the constant reiteration, in the very depths of your being. Do this not once but every day, and after a time, note the result.

But you say that seems absurd. Stop a moment. Do we really want to rid ourselves of these discordant thoughts? Are we in dead earnest about it? You may have been a professing Christian, a follower of that Matchless Life, for many years, and yet you are conscious that there is precious little in your life to remind others of Him; how earnest is your desire to become "perfect even as He is perfect?" I am not thinking now of coarse or flagrant sins, but are we always self-poised, are we as kindly and sympa-

thetic, are we as cheerful and hopeful, are we as patient and trustful, as we ought to be, if we are seeking to follow Him in daily life? If you are going along a country road and a pebble gets into your shoe, you take the shoe off and toss the pebble aside; in other words, you remove the cause of the discomfort at any cost. When we know beyond the shadow of a doubt, that our thoughts are injuring our lives, for time and eternity, and that through us they are hurting all other lives about us, ought we not to be just as willing to pay any price, to get rid of the discordant and harmful thought? Let a man take the fifteen minutes, as many a busy man today is doing, and get away somewhere from the noise and turmoil of it all, and just say to himself, "I am God's child, I am God's child, I am God's child." No man can do this very many days, without carrying

into all of life, — the life of the home, the life of business, the social life, — a sense of dignity and confidence and power such as he has never experienced before.

Another hint as to the best time for lodging an auto-suggestion, so that it may become effective. It is during sleep, when the conscious mind is thoroughly quiescent, that the subconscious mind is most thoroughly awake. When you lie down to sleep at night, suppose you spend the last waking moments in picturing to yourself clearly and definitely the man or woman you want to be. You know what these last thoughts at night contain for most of us, — the worries, the anxieties, the perplexities, the problems of the day just gone, or else, the anxious anticipation of the day that is to come. Now just banish them all, and picture to yourself clearly the ideal man or woman you long to be. Think back

over the past day and see where you failed to be patient with the children, or where you lost your temper in business. The many mistakes and little failures, of which no one of us is very proud, rise before us, as sad reminders of what we might have been. In these last waking moments picture clearly and intensely to yourself the opposites. If you have been impatient, create the mental image of yourself as calmly patient. As you fall asleep, say to yourself, "God helping me I will be patient, I can be patient in the presence of the things that vex me so often, and tomorrow I *will not* lose my self-control." As you fall asleep, that last thought in your conscious mind is lodged in the sub-conscious, and your sub-conscious takes it up and does the work while you sleep; and you rise in the morning to find yourself calm and self-poised, as you have not been, per-

haps for days. I am not describing a beautiful theory merely. I am telling you what has been demonstrated to be true in countless lives.

Are you really in earnest in this matter of making yourself, not in name only but in very truth, God's Child? If you are, you can do it. I am simply bringing you the scientific method for the operation of these wonderful powers, with which God has endowed every soul. All that is required of us, is the patient, persistent and systematic application of the new knowledge that has come; and in your life and mine there will shine forth the beauty, the purity, the nobility, and the divineness of character revealed in the Master. Always and everywhere, by the power of auto-suggestion, we are building the spiritual manhood and womanhood within. *What kind of material are we using?*

S0-GHB-430